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PSC Discussion Papers Series

Volume 20 | Issue 7 Article 1

8-2006

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Recommended Citation
Liu, Jianye; Kerr, Don; and Beaujot, Roderic (2006) "Children and Youth in Canada: Recent Demographic Changes," *PSC Discussion Papers Series*: Vol. 20 : Iss. 7 , Article 1.
Available at: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/pscpapers/vol20/iss7/1

ISSN 1183-7284

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Discussion Paper no. 06-07

August 2006

On the web in PDF format: http://sociology.uwo.ca/popstudies/dp/dp06-07.pdf

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Introduction

Children have been described as "the ultimate resource" for a society's long term well-being and social and economic development (Simon 1982). The absolute and relative number of young people has a variety of important ramifications for many societal institutions, both over the shorter and longer term (Preston 1984). The baby bust of the latter 1960s and many years of below replacement fertility have brought considerable decline in the relative number of children in Canada. As a result, the very fabric of Canadian society and culture has changed. During the baby boom era, Canada was very youth oriented and child centered, whereas by the turn of the century, it has become a society in which the young occupy a much smaller part of the public space. This dramatic shift in our age structure has important consequences for the life experience of the young, whether it be children at the earliest stages of their lives or young adults establishing their independence from the parental home.

This study sets out to document some of the more fundamental trends associated with the life experience of children and youth in Canada. While studies elsewhere have used a variety of definitions, this chapter follows the convention of defining children as persons aged 0 to 14 years, and youth as 15-24 years. We will describe some of the most fundamental demographic and family changes, as well as provide some detail on the economic welfare of children and youth, along with school attendance, and for young adults, labour force participation and commencement of family life (entry into relationships and childbearing). For each of the two broad age categories, we draw systematic comparisons across selected segments of Canadian society and across censuses, with a primary emphasis on the 1981-2001 period.

Absolute and relative number of young Canadians

Canadian fertility has declined to 1.65 in 1981 and 1.5 births per woman in the period 1999-2004 (Statistics Canada 2006, 31). While this presents advantages for children in the competition for parental resources, on a societal level the decline in fertility has lead to a substantial reduction in the relative number of children and youth. While Canada's baby boom cohort has always drawn a great deal of attention, the contraction at the bottom of the age structure has received far less attention.

Annual births have been steadily falling for well over a decade. Since 1989, this drop has been particularly pronounced, falling by almost 20%, from about 403,280 to 327,107 by 2001 (see Figure 1). Overall, in 2001 there were 32% fewer than the 479,275 births that at the height of the baby boom in 1959. Both the absolute and relative number of children and youth in Canadian society has declined. A decline in births implies a reduction in the number of infants being born in our hospitals, and with the passage time, this translates into a decline in the number of preschoolers entering into our educational system, and the impact continues over the life course.

---Figure 1 about here---

In absolute terms, the total number of Canadians under the age of 25 peaked in the 1971 census, before declining somewhat for a decade or so, and then remaining relatively stable. As indicated in Table 1, the total number of Canadians under 25 was 10.4 million in 1981, which was to drop slightly to

about 10.1 million by 2001 (or by about 300,000 over this 20 year period). This relative stability in total population count obscures the real picture in terms of a shift in the relative weight of the young in Canada's age structure. For example, children and youth comprised about 42% of Canada's population in 1981, whereas by 2001 they comprised only 32% of the total. While there was a slight decline in the number of children and youth (down by about 3% over a 20 year period), Canada's overall population size grew at a reasonably robust pace (up by about 25%). Overall, Canada is a much older society than it was merely 20 years ago, a generalization which is true across most western nations.

The size of a birth cohort (infants born in the same year) is a direct function of (i) the relative number of persons at reproductive age, and (ii) their respective fertility behaviour. For example, the number of preschoolers (aged 0-4 years) in the 2001 census can be related to (i) the number of women in Canada of reproductive age over the 1996-2001 period, and (ii) their fertility decisions over this 5 year interval. This in itself explains why the number of births in Canada did not decline further than observed in Figure 1, as the fertility rate in Canada has been below replacement since the 1970s. The total annual births increased only slightly in the 1980s and early 1990s, as relatively large cohorts (born during the baby boom) were making their way through their childbearing ages. The much smaller cohorts of the baby bust are now moving through their prime reproductive ages, while continuing with below replacement fertility. As a result, there has been a major drop in the number of births since the early 1990s and a significant contraction at the bottom of Canada's age structure.

As to exact numbers, the number of preschoolers (0-4 years) in Canada declined slightly over the 1981-2001 period, from about 1.80 million to 1.76 million in 2001 - down by about 2.5% (Table 1). As Canada's overall population grew considerably during this time, the corresponding percentage of Canada's population in this age group declined from 7.3% in 1981 to 5.7% in 2001. The number of children of elementary school age (5-14 years) went up slightly, from 3.73 million in 1981 to 4.09 million (an increase of almost 10%). Yet since this growth was again less than for the Canadian population overall, the relative share of this age group in the total population continued its downward trend, from about 15.0% in 1981 to 13.2% in 2001. Among the youth (aged 15-24) we have witnessed the most noteworthy drop, from about 4.85 million in 1981 to 4.23 million by 2001. This translated into a decline in population share from about 19.5% in 1981 to only 13.6% by 2001. In 1981, the tail end of the baby boom cohort was still moving through their latter teenage years and early 20s, whereas by the turn of the century, it was the children born during Canada's baby bust era (1970s and 1980s) who were moving through these age groups.

---Table 1 about here---

In taking the longer term perspective, it is necessary to return to the situation over half a century ago to find so few children under the age of 5 in Canada. Even though this country's population has more than doubled since the 1950s, we have roughly the same number of young children at the beginning of the 21st century as 50 years earlier (at roughly 1.7 million). This reduction in the share of Canada's overall population that are children and youth may bring a shift in the focus of social and economic policies from child and youth centered priorities to other aspects of our social life.

Family and living arrangements

Along with this reduction in population share, other demographic changes have had important consequences for the well-being of children. Some of the fundamental demographic trends to influence family life over recent decades include delays in fertility and marriage, further reductions in completed fertility, increases in cohabitation and divorce, increases in maternal employment as well as a climb in

non-marital fertility. Some of these trends can clearly be thought of as beneficial for children, whereas others suggest potential disadvantages. For example, the tendency for women to delay childbearing has widely been perceived as a plus for children, as parents delay establishing families until they have successfully gained the resources and experience to be successful as parents. On the other hand, it has been argued that divorce and non-marital childbearing can disadvantage children to the extent that they cannot take advantage of the resources and social capital of one of their parents. Since families are the primary socializing agent of most children and youth, these changes are not without their consequences.

As a result of many of the aforementioned trends, the total number of family households in Canada has not been growing quite as rapidly as other types of households, a generalization that is particularly true for families with children. This is represented in Table 2, which summarizes changes in the number of families and households (by type) on the basis of the 1981 and 2001 censuses. In considering solely dual parent families with children and youth in the home (disregarding their age), the 1981-2001 period was characterized by very modest growth - of only 1.5% over two decades. In comparison, the total number of households (both family and non-family) increased by 40.7%. Among families with children, the most rapid growth involved children born in common-law unions (with an increase of 172%) which served to offset somewhat the 10% decline in the number of married couples with children. In drawing comparisons across different types of households, particularly rapid growth was observed for lone parent families (up by 83.7%), as well as families at later stages of their life course. For example, the number of husband wife families without children at home increased by 69.4%.

---Table 2 about here---

The demography of families is often presented from the point of view of adults. But the changed patterns of entry and exit from relationships have had important consequences on the family living arrangements of children, and only some of these living arrangements are identifiable via the census. Unfortunately the census does not provide information on the number of step families (where one of the parents is not the biological or adoptive parent of all the children) and blended families (where at least one child did not have the same biological or adoptive parents as the other children). Table 3 summarizes what we know from the census on the living arrangements of children and youth, in distinguishing those living with two parents, living with a lone parent, in a common law union or a husband wife family.

Consistent with the above discussion, the percentage of children in Canada living with a single parent continues to climb, from 10.7% in 1981 to 17.8% by 2001. It is difficult to distinguish married couple and common law couples prior to the 1991 census in Canada, but since 1991 the percentage living common law has increased in quite a pronounced manner, from only 7% to 12.8% in a period of 10 years. In supplementing this census data with information provided by the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, it has been estimated that just under 10 percent of children live in step families whereas an additional 6 percent live in blended families (Cheal 1996). While the census indicates that roughly 4 out of every 5 children in 2001 were living with two parents, this does not imply that these children were living with both biological parents. The reality is more complex than the census can document (Juby et al. 2001).

---Table 3 about here---

Table 3 also provides information on the living arrangements of youth (15-24 years), where changes observed over the 1981-2001 period are distinct from what has characterized children (0-14 years). For example, the percentage of youth living with two parents actually increased over this period

rather than decreased, from 53.6% in 1981 to 59.8% in 2001. The reason for the change rests with delayed home-leaving, a trend that first established itself in the late 1970s (Boyd and Norris 1998). In 1981, fully 36.0% of youth were living with neither parent, a percentage which declined to 24.8% by 2001. In explanation, economic factors are certainly at play, with considerable evidence suggesting that young adults encountered greater difficulties in establishing themselves in the labour market of the 1980s and 1990s relative to earlier cohorts. Young Canadians are now more likely to spend a longer period at school. Cultural factors have also helped to make parental homes more suitable to older children, as the generation gap has narrowed. Parents have developed more flexible and tolerant attitudes toward their adolescent children (Wister, Mitchell and Gee 1997; Zhao 1994; Boyd and Norris 1995).

Fewer brothers and sisters

Given the delay in marriage and child-bearing, the family circumstances into which children are born have changed. As the percentage of all families that include children and youth has declined, so has the average size of the Canadian family. Children and youth are far less likely than in the past to be raised in a family with a large number of brothers and sisters (see Figure 2). This is demonstrated in the distribution of children and youth sharing accommodations under the same roof.

---Figure 2 about here---

The proportion of children and youth with no brothers or sisters at home increased from just over 10 percent in 1971 to about 20 percent by 1991, and 24% by 2001 (see Figure 2). Another 43.5 percent had one brother or sister at home in 2001, relative to just under 40 percent in 1981 and fewer than 1 in 4 in the 1970s. Similarly, whereas almost one in four children lived in a family with 5+ children in 1971, this ratio has plummeted to almost 1 in 40 by 2001. All of this implies that greater proportions of babies are being born to “inexperienced” parents, as fewer brothers and sisters imply fewer older siblings. For instance, half of the generation born in the early 1960s had two older brothers or sisters, compared to less than one-fifth of those born 30 years later. Fewer births, and their concentration over a shorter period, not only imply more potential parental resources per child, but also children having less opportunity to interact with and learn from siblings.

Family change and Economic Welfare

Over the latter part of the 20th century, there were some rather noticeable ups and downs in the Canadian economy. In particular, Canadians experienced two severe recessions, one in the early 1980s and the other in the early 1990s. In 1982 and 1983, the North American economy witnessed climbing unemployment, high inflation, and declining real earnings, making it rather difficult for many parents to meet the needs of their children. After a period of economic recovery through to the late 1980s, a second recession took hold in 1991 and 1992, again introducing considerable downward pressure on incomes. Since this period of economic difficulty during the early to mid 1990s, labour market conditions in North America have improved noticeably. A concurrent trend throughout this entire period was a noticeable growth in female labour force participation, particularly among women with children. This has served to increase or at least stabilize family income by increasing the number of earners per family in a context where individual earnings among young adults were often stagnant or even declining (Picot et al. 1998; Baker 2002; Beaujot 2000).

Picot et al. (1998) have emphasized three fundamental institutions in shaping the economic well-being of Canadian children, including (i) the market – especially the labour market, (ii) the state – with

direct transfers of both services and payments, and (iii) the family (in explaining how Canadians earn and pool resources). Without downplaying the importance of structural explanations that emphasize the role of labour markets and/or government policy, it is possible to highlight several family changes that obviously hold implications for the economic well-being and societal integration of the young. While obviously changes in labour market conditions are particularly salient, shifts in living arrangements and family structure are also relevant.

Young children are completely dependent upon others for their well-being. The ability to cope with family change varies by age, with childhood clearly a vulnerable stage of the life cycle. Correspondingly, the well-being of children is often jeopardized by the difficulties experienced by the adults in their lives. While this is less the case with youth, many continue to be dependent upon their parents well into adulthood. Family patterns as of late bring considerable diversity to the world of children: from children who experience intact parental relationships to those who experience episodes of lone parenthood, reconstituted relationships and step parenting. All of this diversity brings consequences, frequently unforeseen and unintentional on the part of parents. Family change can have an impact on various dimensions of child well-being, including important changes in the manner in which Canadians earn and pool resources.

There are several obstacles to accurately documenting recent trends in economic well being, not the least being an absence of consensus among social scientists regarding which threshold might best be chosen to represent a "minimal standard of living" or “poverty.” There is currently no consensus among sociologists and economists in Canada regarding the income level that would be appropriate for delineating the poor, or for that matter, how this might differ across families of varying size or across different regions of the country. While Statistics Canada has never claimed to measure poverty (due in part to this lack of consensus), it does regularly produce statistics on the incidence of low income, using alternate LICO’s (low-income cutoffs, either before or after tax). These cutoffs provide for some sense as to the proportion of Canadians living under what are considered “strained circumstances”. Table 4 provides information on low income status, by selected family types, for the 1991, 1996 and 2001 censuses. In addition, Table 4 provides information on median income of Canadian families that include at least one child and/or youth. As the Canadian census gathered no information on income tax paid, all of these statistics refer to income data, prior to tax. While Statistics Canada often highlights low income statistics using LICO’s – after tax, Table 4 is based on their pre-tax (1992 base) LICO’s – the only option available when working with census data.

After adjustment for inflation, Table 4 demonstrates how: (i) family type is particularly important in documenting the incidence of low income and median income (with female lone parent families particularly disadvantaged), (ii) the recession of the early 1990s had a noticeable impact in terms of worsening the incidence of child poverty and lowering median income (in comparing 1990 with 1995), and (iii) the latter 1990s was a period of economic recovery (in comparing 1995 with 2000). This latter period witnessed significant gains in family income which served to offset the economic downturn of the early 1990s. The overall outcome was that median income was slightly higher in 2000 than in 1990, whereas the incidence of low income did not change significantly. The percentage of children and youth living below Statistics Canada’s low income cut-off (before tax) varied from 15.7 % in 1991, up to 19.9 % in 1996, and back down to 17.2 % by 2001. Both children and youth are less likely to be classified as income poor when they live with two parents (as opposed to living with a lone parent) and in a married couple family (as opposed to a common-law family). The incidence of income poverty has been found to be four to five times higher among children in lone parent families relative to married families. Moreover, by family type, children have higher poverty rates than youth. This is because the

parents of children tend to be younger than those of youth, with less work experience and lower earnings.

---Table 4 about here---

Table 4 also includes information on the income poverty of young adults who live with neither parent, i.e. youth living apart from their parents in either a married union, a common-law type of arrangement, or as a lone parent. Clearly these young adults face economic difficulties not characteristic of those who continue to live with their parents. For youth apart from parents, the worst case scenario, by far, is to be lone parent, as for example, about 6 out of 10 young adults raising children alone were classified as low income in 2001. Younger adults (under 25 years) who are living with a partner are clearly better off than those who are caring for a child by themselves, as 22.4 percent of married youth are classified as low income, as are 25.3 % of young adults living common law. With this in mind, the previously mentioned delay of home leaving serves to reduce the number of youth classified as low income, as does the level of non-marital fertility among the young.

The fertility decline that followed the baby boom had a net beneficial impact on the economic welfare of families. A lowering in the number of children per family has direct economic ramifications, since it is associated with fewer dependent children and youth per household, and thus, a decline in the number of claimants on family income (Dooley 1988; Brouillette et al. 1990). We have also witnessed an upward shift in the age pattern of fertility (Ram 1990; Beaujot et al. 1995; Bélanger 1999). This is associated with a higher level of economic well-being as adults delay having children until later in their reproductive years when economic resources are generally greater (Oppenheimer 1988; Grindstaff et al. 1989) and young adults are much more likely to invest in education and establishing themselves in the labour market. While fertility has declined, non-marital fertility as a proportion of all births has steadily risen. For example, whereas only about 14% of all births were to unmarried mothers in 1981, this percentage has approached 40 percent as we moved into the 21st century (Beaujot 2000). This growth in the relative number of non-marital births is not due to an increased incidence births with no declared father, but to the growing popularity of common-law unions in Canada. While the fertility rate of common-law partners continues to be lower than among married couples (Dumas and Bélanger 1997), this fundamental change in nuptiality is important to the extent that common law unions tend to be far less stable than legal marriages – even when they include children (Marcil-Gratton 1993; Marcil-Gratton and Le Bourdais 1999; Le Bourdais and Lapierre-Adamcyk 2004).

Recent years have witnessed trends toward higher rates of union dissolution (involving both legal marriages and cohabiting unions). As with births to single parents, there is ample evidence to suggest considerable economic hardship for both women and children following separation and/or divorce (Ross and Shillington 1989; Dooley 1991; Rashid 1994). While the long-term economic repercussions of union dissolution are generally not as difficult as those faced by single women who have births without a partner, in general, children experience considerable economic hardship as a result of their parent's inability to continue their relationship (McQuillan 1991). As a consequence of both lower proportions married and higher rates of union dissolution, the proportion of all families headed by a single parent has increased.

The education of youth

Canada devotes a considerable share of its public expenditures to education. In international comparisons, it currently ranks sixth among 28 OECD countries in total public investment in education relative to gross domestic product (OECD 2000, 54). In terms of total expenditures from both public and

private sources, this rank rises to third, after Denmark and Finland. For a variety of reasons, Canada continues to place priority on public education, resulting in a relatively high proportion of its young continuing its education well into young adulthood.

Canada has made very good progress in educating its citizens since the early 1980s. For example, the high school dropout rate has declined, as graduation has become the minimum requirement for most types of employment (Guppy and Davis 1998; Mori and Burke 1989). Post-secondary education participation rates have also risen quite dramatically, and are currently very high by international standards. Table 5 provides information on the school attendance of the young by comparing participation rates in 1981 and 2001. For practical reasons, youth have been divided into two groups, i.e. adolescents aged 15-18 and young adults aged 19-24. This division reflects the common pattern where most youth 18 and under are in high school with the norm of 12 years of schooling.

For youth aged 15-18, 1 in 4 were not in school in 1981, a number which has declined to about 1 in 5 by 2001. While these statistics imply a non-trivial (albeit declining) high school drop out rate, many of these youth do eventually return to high school (through adult education). Among youth aged 19-24, the situation is similar, as participation rates have consistently climbed throughout the 1981-2001 period. Whereas in 1981 about 3 in 10 Canadians aged 19-24 were studying (either full or part time), by 2001 this participation rate had risen to just over one half. In drawing comparisons by gender, young women have clearly made greater gains than young men, as about 55% report studying in 2001 relative to about 49% of young men. In the early 1980s, the situation was quite different, as young men were more likely to be studying, with about 32% reporting school attendance relative to 28% of young women.

---Table 5 about here---

The labour force activity of youth

The absolute number of youth in the Canadian labour force was actually lower in the 2001 census than two decades earlier in 1981. According to the 2001 census, about 2.58 million youth were either employed or actively seeking employment. This was lower than the 3.04 million documented in 1981, although up slightly from 2.56 million in 1991 (Table 6). Between 1981 and 1991, this number of young people working or looking for work dropped by about 16 %, before rebounding moderately by about 7% between 1991 and 2001. All persons 15 years and older who are either employed or seeking employment during the week preceding the census are included in the labour market (whether they are working full or part time).

---Table 6 about here---

These shifts in absolute numbers are directly related to changes in age distribution. As the last of the baby boomers moved into mid-adulthood in the 1980s, the number of youth available for employment declined, irrespective of changes in their propensity to enter the labour force.

Table 7 portrays labour force participation rates of youth by age and gender, across the 1981, 1991 and 2001 censuses. This participation rate has varied from about 67% in both 1981 and 1991 to around 65% by 2001. Table 7 demonstrates how some of the most noteworthy changes in labour force participation have varied by age and sex. The trend for young women is clearly different from that of young men, as the former have experienced an upturn in participation rates whereas the latter experienced a decrease. As a result, the participation rates of young men and women have now reached

near parity, at 65.9% and 64.1%, respectively. A variety of social and cultural factors are responsible for this, including a broad societal shift toward gender equity in employment and other aspects of Canadian life. In 1981, these participation rates were some distance from parity, although since this point in time, the participation rates of young men have fallen slightly just as the participation rates of young women have risen.

---Table 7 about here---

In addition, Table 7 also demonstrates how the trends observed among teenagers are different from those observed among young adults. The general trend for teenagers has been toward increased labour force participation (typically on a part time basis) whereas among older youth the trend has been in the opposite direction. In addition, the gender difference in labour force activity is small if not negligible among high school age youth, yet increases among older youth. By age 24, about 88% of men are involved in the labour force compared to 80% of women. This is consistent with the earlier observation that women have higher participation rates in post-secondary education. In addition, young women are more likely to temporarily leave the labour force due to child bearing. While the fertility of young adults has declined over past decades, it continues to have a larger impact on the labour force behaviour of young women than young men.

The marital characteristics and childbearing of youth

As the living arrangements of young Canadians have changed over recent censuses, so has their marital behaviour. Observing the marital characteristics of youth by age and sex leads to a fundamental generalization: across most ages, the percentage of youth who are legally married continues to decline while the percentage of living common-law continues to climb (Table 8). That the former has not been fully offset by change in the latter is consistent with a further generalization – that the percentage of young men and women living together has dropped, whether in legal marriages or common law unions.

---Table 8 about here---

For example, among women 24 years of age, the percentage legally married has declined from more than half (53.1%) in 1981 to just about 1 in 4 (25.1%) in 2001. During this same period, the percentage living common law has increased from 9.1% in 1981 up to 31.3% in 2001. Similarly, among men 24 years of age, the percentage legally married declined from 36.5% to only 13.1% while the percentage living common law rose from 9.2% to 22.4%. Again, these numbers suggest a growing inclination among youth to avoid formal marriage, with the option of common law unions growing in popularity, and a decline in the total proportion in union.

As the fertility of common law couples is lower than married couples, this change in nuptiality has further contributed to fertility decline. With this change in the marital behaviour of youth, there has been a corresponding decline in the number of children ever born to young women. This is demonstrated in Table 9, which provides estimates on the number of children ever born for women aged 18 – 24 years (in the absence of a direct fertility question in the 2001 census). Across all ages, the number of children born to women (including those in common law unions and single women) was lower in 2001 than in earlier censuses. For example, among women 24 years of age, the number of children per 1,000 women was 279 in 2001, down from 578 in 1981. As this is low by historical standards, it is also rather low in international comparisons.

---Table 9 about here---

Canada has witnessed a changing age pattern of fertility, with several decades of declining fertility among young adults. More generally, fertility has been declining for all ages 15-29, and especially for ages 20-24. This can be held in contrast with an upward trend in fertility at ages 30-39. In 1970, the fertility of women in their latter 20s (25-29 years) surpassed the fertility of women in their early 20s, but by 1990, the fertility of women in their early 30s (30-34 years) also surpassed those in their early 20s (Grindstaff 1995). Young men and women are increasingly delaying childbearing in pursuit of alternate priorities, just as they are delaying the establishment of unions (including both marriage and cohabitation).

Discussion and Conclusion

In the 2001 census, the relative number of children and youth is very low by historical standards. The proportion of all families that include at least one child or youth has declined, as has average family size. The number and proportion of children and youth living with a lone parent has risen, while the proportion living alone has declined. For a variety of reasons, young Canadians are less likely to marry today than in the past, while a substantial number have opted for a common law union or to live with their parent(s). In addition, the fertility of young adults (youth in their latter teens and early 20s) has fallen to an unprecedented low.

These changes are partly a function of youth facing different circumstances in the labour market and preparing themselves accordingly. In particular young Canadians are more likely to stay in school than in the past; full time school attendance is up, and the likelihood of dropping out is down. The participation rate of young women in both post secondary education and the labour force has risen (almost reaching parity with young men). Significant economic difficulties persist for many children and youth, particularly among those living with a single mother, or living as a lone parent themselves. An income gap persists, across family types, age groups, and by sex. Women with young children but no partner face considerable economic difficulties.

These demographic and socioeconomic changes have had important consequences for the young, both positive and negative, and they call for a discussion of alternative social and family accommodations. The simple question can be asked, as to whether the society is properly organized to meet the evolving needs of the young. As Canada's population is expected to continue to age into the 21st century, what will be some of the consequences of this change for its youngest citizens? In considering the impact of this transformation on the welfare of children and youth, we can see that they have benefited from the evolution of parental characteristics, in particular parents' higher levels of education and later ages at parenting, as well as smaller family sizes. Economically they have particularly benefited from the work status of mothers. The main negative is that the young are more likely to be born into unstable relationships, including cohabiting relationships, and that is where the interests of adults and children are most likely to come into conflict. While adults benefit from marital transformations that permit flexibility in the pursuit of stronger satisfaction in relationships, children are more likely to experience the outcome as instability.

In some cases, the greater flexibility in relationships and families can serve to benefit the young, as they can potentially escape environments that are working against their welfare (as for example, in highly conflictive or abusive families). In other cases, children do not experience the absence of a parent from the household in a positive manner, nor do they necessarily experience the addition of a step-parent favorably. These problems are often compounded by the lower labour force participation and low

income of lone mothers. Even in two parent families, average incomes barely kept pace with the cost of living over the 1981-2001 period, presenting frustrations and hardships for the young in particular.

While children may very well benefit from more stable adult relationships, it is hard to envisage how recent trends in union dissolution could be reversed. Consequently, families need to be supported as they are now, rather than attempting to make them correspond to some ideal. Given the co-existence of various types of families, policies should especially seek to enhance the welfare of the young, regardless of family setting. In developing public policy, we need to know more about the circumstances that lead to the successful adaptation of children under different types of family arrangements. Yet most surveys currently available on the social and economic characteristics of the young are lacking information on the economic links and day to day involvement of parents that do not share the child's primary residence. This is certainly true of the census, which has never collected information on family relations beyond the immediate household. The development of policies, supportive of children and youth, lacks this basic information. We know relatively little on the real dynamics underlying many of the changes in familial relationships highlighted in the current chapter.

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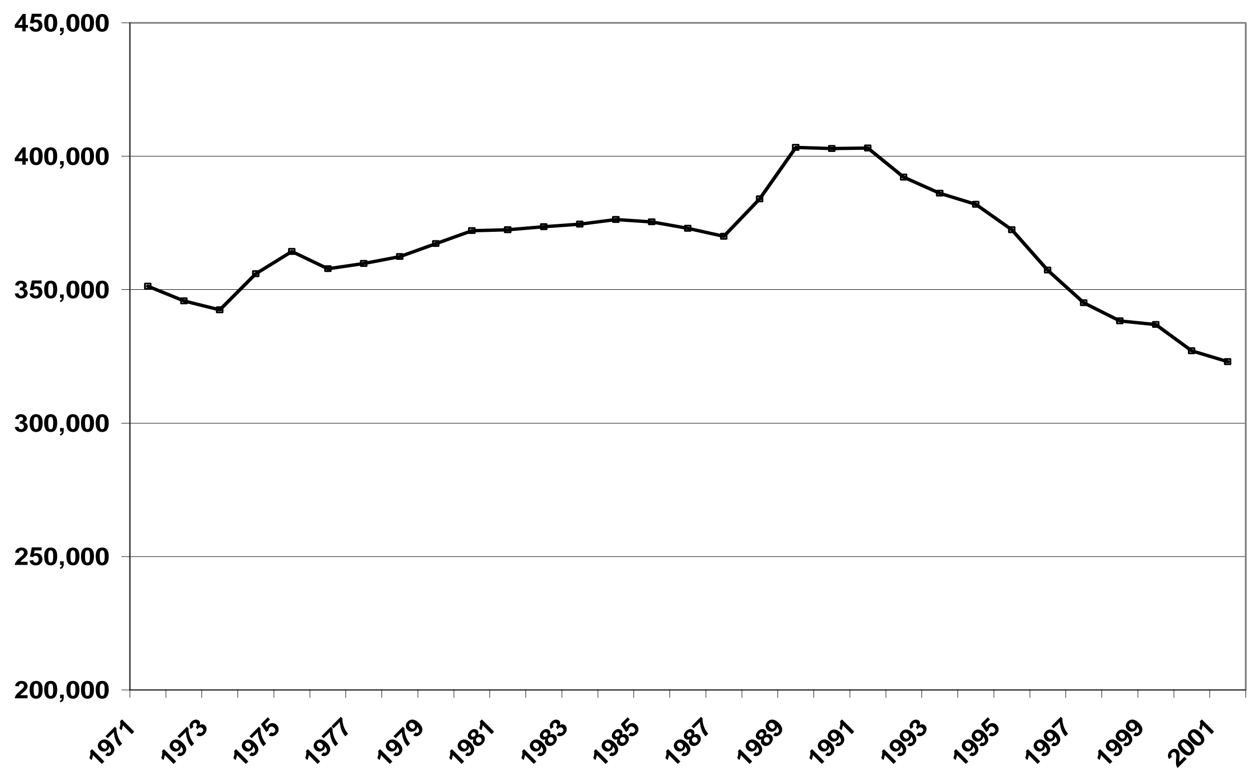
Tables and figures

Figure 1. Annual births in Canada, 1971 - 2001



Source: Statistics Canada (2005).

Table 1. Children and youth by selected age group, Canada, 1981-2001

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Children aged 0-4 #	1,803,588	1,840,912	1,958,127	1,961,148	1,759,196
Children aged 0-4 %	7.3	7.1	7.0	6.6	5.7
Children aged 5-14 #	3,728,975	3,643,850	3,831,697	4,024,403	4,095,342
Children aged 5-14 %	15.0	14.0	13.7	13.6	13.2
Youth aged 15-24 #	4,846,366	4,433,978	4,016,221	4,011,848	4,227,228
Youth aged 15-24 %	19.5	17.0	14.3	13.5	13.6
Total children and youth #	10,378,929	9,918,740	9,806,045	9,997,399	10,081,766
Total children and youth %	41.8	38.0	35.0	33.8	32.5
Total population	24,820,393	26,101,155	28,031,394	29,610,757	31,021,251

Note: These population estimates are directly based on the respective Canadian Censuses, with adjustments for census coverage error.
Source: Population estimates by age and sex, Canada, provinces and territories, 1971-2001 (2003 Annual Demographic Statistics)

Table 2. Family and household types, Canada, 1981 and 2001

	Number (thousands)		Change %
	1981	2001	1981-2001
Total households (private)	8218.50	11563.00	40.7
Family households	6231.50	8155.60	30.9
Non-family households	2050.00	3407.40	66.2
Husband wife families with children at home*	3599.10	3653.10	1.5
Total Married couple with children	3478.90	3132.40	-10.0
Total common law with children	120.20	520.70	333.2
Lone parent families	713.80	1311.20	83.7
Husband wife families without children at home*	2011.40	3406.70	69.4

* includes common law

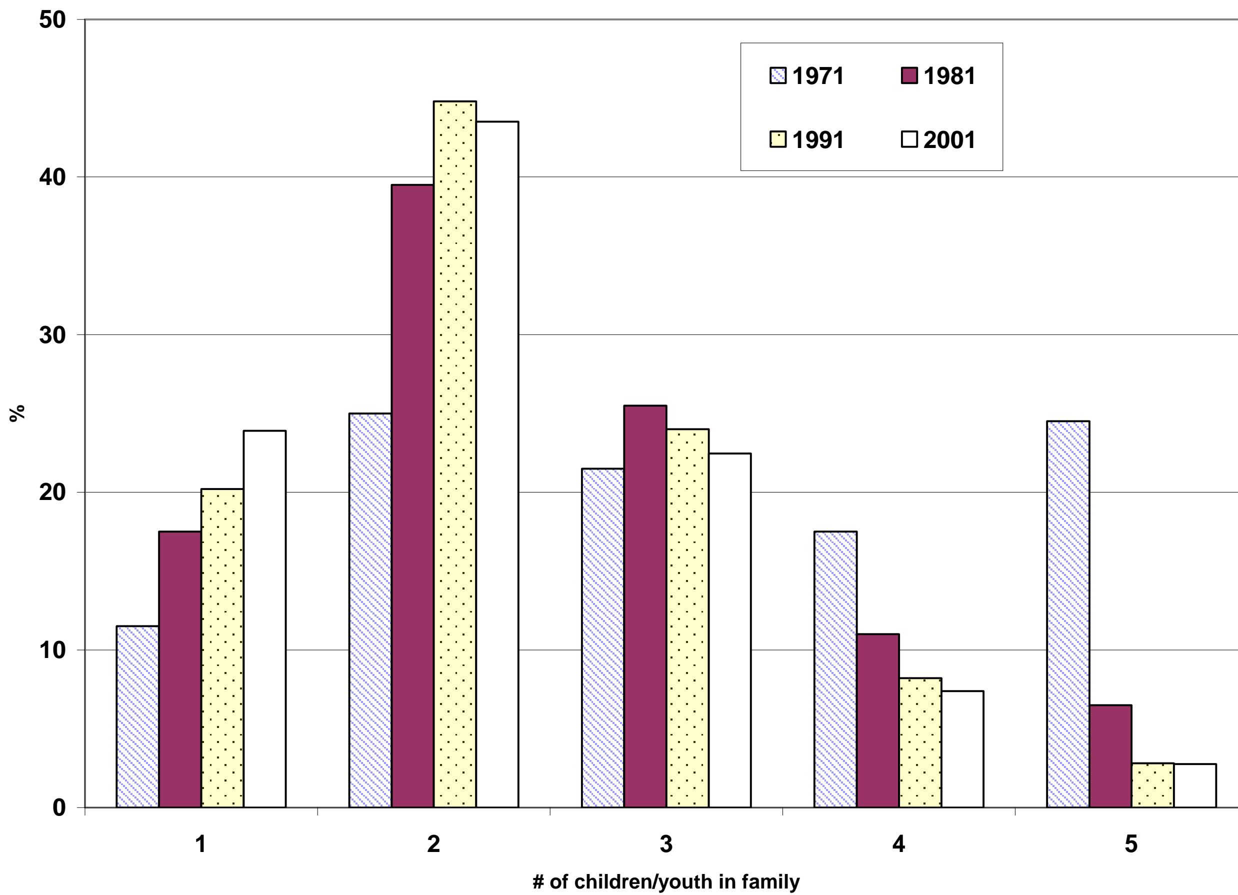
Sources: 1981 census, Cat. No. 92-325; Beaujot (1991:244); Statistics Canada, 2003, Cat. No. 97F0005XCB01005.

Table 3. Living arrangements of children (0-14) and youth (15-24) by family type, Canada, 1981-2001

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Children 0-14					
With two parents	**87.1**	**85.7**	**84.0**	**81.5**	**81.4**
Husband-wife			**77.0**	**71.3**	**68.6**
Common-law			**7.0**	**10.2**	**12.8**
With a lone parent	**10.7**	**12.3**	**13.6**	**16.5**	**17.8**
With neither parents	**14.6**	**14.4**	**14.7**	**13.2**	**12.4**
Youth 15-24					
With two parents	**53.6**	**56.1**	**57.5**	**59.7**	**59.8**
Husband-wife			**55.2**	**56.5**	**55.6**
Common-law			**2.3**	**3.2**	**4.2**
With a lone parent	**10.3**	**12.0**	**12.3**	**13.9**	**15.4**
With neither parents	**36.0**	**31.9**	**30.2**	**26.3**	**24.8**

Note: Husband-wife and common-law could not be distinguished in 1981 and 1986 censuses.
Sources: Based on Census of Canada, 1981-2001, Public Use Microdata File (Individuals File).

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of young Canadians living with parent(s) by total number of children and youth in the family, Canada, 1971-2001



Source: For 1971, Wargon (1979) Children in Canadian Families. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 98-810, Table 1. For 1981 and 1991, Kerr et al. (1994) Children and Youth: An Overview. Statistics Canada Cat. No. 96-320E. For 2001, the 2001 Census Public Use Microdata File, unpublished tabulation.

Table 4. Incidence of low income for children and youth, and median income by family type, Canada, 1990-2001

Family type	1990	1995	2000
	Incidence of Low Income		
Children (0-14)			
Child in a married couple family	10.9	14.9	12.5
Child in a common-law couple family	21.4	25.4	19.3
Child in a male lone-parent family	25.5	33.1	25.7
Child in a female lone-parent family	62.7	65	54.3
Youth (15-24)			
Youth in a married couple family	6.8	10.3	8.2
Youth in a common-law couple family	10	14	11.4
Youth in a male lone-parent family	15.5	21.9	15.9
Youth in a female lone-parent family	32.7	37.6	31
Youth is married	17.7	27.5	22.4
Youth is living common-law	23.4	32.1	25.3
Youth is lone parent	84.5	88.4	60.1
Total	18.7	19.9	17.2

Family type	1991	1996	2001
	Median Income (2000 dollars)		
Two parent families with children/youth	63,571	61,110	67,919
One earner	44,638	42,644	43,860
Two earner	63,825	63,879	69,746
Lone parent families with children/youth	22,065	23,340	30,088
Male lone-parent families	39,366	33,658	43,222
Female lone parent familes	19,868	22,152	27,766

Note: the census collects information on the income for the previous tax year.
Source: Census of Canada, 1991-2001, Public Use Microdata File (Individuals File)

Table 5. School attendance of youth, by gender and age groups 15-18 and 19-24, Canada, 1981 – 2001

		1981				2001			
# number									
		Total	Not attending	Full time	Part time	Total	Not attending	Full time	Part time
15-18	**T**	1,837,695	464,970	1,337,735	34,970	1,646,505	339,865	1,264,225	42,415
	M	940,485	243,785	679,485	17,220	851,830	181,750	648,275	21,810
	F	897,200	221,195	658,250	17,745	794,680	158,115	615,955	20,605
19-24	**T**	2,800,300	1,951,120	613,400	235,765	2,341,685	1,132,600	1,011,785	197,320
	M	1,401,485	949,710	333,675	118,095	1,182,455	606,165	478,050	98,225
	F	1,398,820	1,001,410	279,725	117,675	1,159,230	526,430	533,720	99,090
%									
15-18	**T**		25.3	72.8	1.9		20.6	76.8	2.6
	M		25.9	72.2	1.8		21.3	76.1	2.6
	F		24.7	73.4	2		19.9	77.5	2.6
19-24	**T**		69.7	21.9	8.4		48.4	43.2	8.4
	M		67.8	23.8	8.4		51.3	40.4	8.3
	F		71.6	20	8.4		45.4	46	8.5

Source: Census of Canada, 1981 and 2001, Statistics Canada Public Use Microdata Files (individual file).

Table 6. Population of youth in labour force by age group and sex, Canada, 1981, 1991, and 2001 (in thousands)

Age group	Number			Percentage change	
and sex	1981	1991	2001	1981-1991	1991-2001
15 to 24					
Total	**3,036.3**	**2,564.2**	**2,575.1**	**-15.5**	**0.4**
Male	1,632.1	1,341.2	1,333.5	-17.8	-0.6
Female	1,404.2	1,223.0	1,241.6	-12.9	1.5
15 to 19					
Total	**1,074.0**	**904.4**	**1,015.8**	**-15.8**	**12.3**
Male	571.6	471.6	525.1	-17.5	11.3
Female	502.4	432.8	490.8	-13.9	13.4
20 to 24					
Total	**1,962.3**	**1,659.8**	**1,559.3**	**-15.4**	**-6.1**
Male	1,060.5	869.7	808.4	-18.0	-7.0
Female	901.8	790.2	750.9	-12.4	-5.0

Source: 1. Census of Canada, 2001, Public Use Microdata File (Individuals File)
2. Kerr et al., 1994, p39

Table 7. Labour force participation rate of youth by age and sex, Canada, 1981, 1991, and 2001

Age and sex	1981	1991	2001
15	14.8	21.9	23.2
16	28.1	34.7	38.5
17	44.1	47.1	51.5
18	64.4	62.6	64.8
19	78.3	75.6	73.5
20	83.5	81.9	77.1
21	84.3	83.9	79.3
22	84.3	85.0	81.0
23	84.4	86.0	82.9
24	83.8	86.5	83.9
All youth (15-24)	**65.5**	**66.9**	**65.0**
15	16.2	23.1	24.7
16	30.1	35.7	37.9
17	46.2	47.7	51.0
18	66.6	62.9	63.5
19	81.4	76.7	74.6
20	87.8	84.3	77.7
21	89.8	87.1	81.2
22	91.2	88.6	83.2
23	92.5	89.9	86.1
24	93.3	91.3	88.1
Male youth (15-24)	**69.7**	**68.9**	**65.9**
15	13.5	20.6	21.5
16	26.0	33.8	39.2
17	42.0	46.4	52.0
18	62.1	62.3	66.3
19	75.2	74.5	72.3
20	79.1	79.3	76.4
21	78.8	80.5	77.3
22	77.4	81.4	78.8
23	76.4	82.0	79.7
24	74.4	82.0	79.9
Female youth (15-24)	**61.2**	**64.9**	**64.1**

Source: 1. Census of Canada, 2001, Public Use Microdata File (Individuals File)
2. Kerr et al., 1994, p40

Table 8. Marital status of youth age 18-24 by age and sex, Canada, 1981-2001.

	1981			1991			2001		
Age	Single	Married	Common law	Single	Married	Common law	Single	Married	Common law
Female									
18	91.4	4.1	4.5	94.3.	1.3	4.4	95.7	0.6	3.6
19	83.1	9.7	7.2	89.2	3.1	7.7	90.8	1.9	7.2
20	73.0	18.0	9.0	82.9	6.3	10.8	83.6	3.9	12.5
21	62.6	27.5	9.9	75.3	11.3	13.4	75.1	6.9	18.0
22	53.2	36.9	9.9	67.1	17.7	15.2	66.1	11.4	22.5
23	44.7	45.7	9.6	58.7	25.1	16.2	54.5	18.9	26.6
24	37.8	53.1	9.1	51.3	32.5	16.2	43.6	25.1	31.3
Male									
18	98.6	0.5	0.9	98.9	0.2	0.9	99.1	0.2	0.7
19	95.7	1.9	2.4	97.1	0.6	2.3	97.5	0.4	2.0
20	90.5	5.1	4.4	94.1	1.5	4.4	94.0	1.0	5.0
21	82.8	10.8	6.4	89.2	3.5	7.1	89.0	2.0	9.0
22	73.4	18.7	7.9	83.4	6.9	9.7	83.3	4.2	12.5
23	63.3	27.9	8.8	76.8	11.4	11.8	73.8	8.2	18.0
24	54.3	36.5	9.2	69.2	17.2	13.6	64.5	13.1	22.4

Note: The difference from 100 comprises the separated, divorced and widowed.

Sources: 1. Census of Canada, 1981-2001, Public Use Microdata File (Individuals File).

2. Kerr et al., 1994, p24

Table 9. Child woman ratio for women aged 18-24 by age, Canada, 1981-2001

Age	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**Total**
1981	39	73	138	219	324	435	578	257
1986	21	45	71	151	213	308	426	186
1991	19	36	67	116	160	240	321	140
1996	22	44	71	114	163	214	298	133
2001	21	35	60	102	140	202	279	119

Note: 1. Children at home per 1000 women.
2. The number of children at home is estimated by author using Number of Persons in Census Family and Census Family Status and Living Arrangements

Source: Calculation is based on the Census of Canada, 1981-2001, Public Use Microdata Files (Individuals File).

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